

## Technology Lending: Just Like Any Other Collection, Sort Of

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# Technology Lending: Just Like Any Other Collection, Sort Of

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## Abstract

Technology lending or equipment lending has long been a staple of academic libraries. Think back a few years ago and you'll probably remember calculators, tape recorders, point and shoot cameras, and projectors being loaned out at your library. Past was certainly prologue in this collection as Clemson University Libraries made a deliberate decision to upgrade the technology being loaned out in the spring of 2012 to keep up with the changing needs of students, faculty, and staff. Some of the initial upgraded items included DSLR cameras, camera lenses, iPads, tripods, microphones, and digital voice recorders. Over the past five and a half years more technology has been added to the lending collection including higher-end DSLR cameras, Xbox and PlayStation consoles and games, mobile green screens, and virtual reality equipment. A technology lending collection is similar to any other collection an academic library may have, but different in many ways. Learn how to get started with technology lending or upgrading your current lending practices by assessing your needs and creating and managing a technology lending fund.

## Background

When you think about technology lending or equipment lending at college or university libraries, you may conjure images of calculators, point and shoot cameras, tape recorders, and projectors being loaned out to students. If this was your mental image, you are not alone. In the spring of 2012 Clemson University Libraries saw an opportunity to expand and upgrade the technology lending collection at Cooper Library. Around the same time the Learning Commons had a furniture, technology, and power upgrade to keep pace with changing student needs. The initial upgrade included 10 DSLR cameras, 10 point and shoot cameras, 6 mid-level camcorders, 2 higher-end camcorders, 5 tripods, 5 Garmin hand-held GPS systems, and 10 iPads.

## Why Lendable Technology?

There were several reasons for upgrading and expanding the lendable technology collection. We were in the process of implementing a digital studio and felt ramping up the tools students would need to capture audio and video would be the first logical step. There were several avenues for students to borrow higher-end equipment on campus, but one charged a fee and the other required students to be enrolled in a particular department. We wanted all students to have access to the lendable technology regardless of their departmental affiliation. Another reason for the upgrade was simple: We're a library and this is what we do. Libraries have always provided materials and services that would

be unattainable and cost prohibitive for just one individual or a small group. Think about the expensive collections we support: books, journals, and databases, to name a few, that would be out of reach for most students, faculty, and staff. As mentioned earlier, most college and university libraries already support some kind of technology lending collection. We decided to pay close attention to this underappreciated, but extremely important collection by expanding and upgrading the items we were lending, which allowed students the opportunity to use equipment and technology they might not be able to afford (see Appendix A).

Another reason for the technology upgrade and expansion was centered on the changing needs of students and what is expected of them. Students are no longer passive learners; they are active learners who create. Think about the explosion of maker-spaces on college campuses, public libraries, and community centers over the past 10 years. Students are makers and they are expected to create video, audio, and multimedia projects as part of their class assignments. The "YouTube effect" or the ubiquity of capturing everything on video has also contributed to the student as creator.

## Getting Started

The first step to upgrading a lendable technology collection is assessing your needs. This can take several forms and will require some investigation. Are any other departments on campus currently

lending technology? If so, what are their policies, costs, and inventory? Does your college/university have a curricula need for higher-end technology that is currently not being met? What, if any, funds are available? How sustainable is an upgraded collection? The questions are endless, but the point is to assess what you know and make good decisions based on what you uncover.

Whether you plan to upgrade your lendable technology collection or not, it's always a prudent idea to listen to your students. They'll tell you what they want or what they think you should purchase. It's always a good lesson in humility when you purchase something that you believe is the next big thing, or you like it so everyone should like it, only to find out the students don't use it or prefer a different brand or model. Listen to what the students have to say; do your research, including asking the opinion of other libraries that may have the same product; and make a decision based on your analysis. It's also a good idea to purchase the warranty or extended warranty if one exists.

It's always a good idea to start small if you're not fully committed to transforming the entire lendable collection. If you have the budget, purchase one DSLR camera and advertise that you have it for student, faculty, and staff use. If the camera is constantly checked out and students are asking for more, it's a sign the experiment worked and you could benefit from purchasing more high-end technology.

If you can devote a staff member to oversee the lendable technology collection, it will save much time, avoid major issues, and help make informed future purchases. This staff member would conduct inventory, handle all complex check-ins, manage the reservation system, set policies for fines and technology usage, track usage statistics, and make purchase request suggestions based on demand. Keeping the technology together is another easy way to keep track of the many pieces and parts that seem to accumulate once your holdings get to a certain level. Our lendable technology is stored in a room separately from reserves, holding shelves, and any new book holdings (see Figure 1, Appendix B).

Another good idea is to track the usage of the new technology. If your ILS allows you to put the technology in a separate category, it will make life easy

when running usage reports. Unfortunately for us, the technology purchased since 2012 was not separated from the older items and includes things like calculators, phone chargers, and other forms of technology. We can track individual item usage but not the percentage or number of check-outs of the new technology against the entire library circulating collection.

## Funding and Budgets

I wish I could say that finding money and creating a sustained budget for expanding a technology lending collection is easy, but it's not. Money in libraries is always tight and finding a continuous stream for an annual budget of a new or expanded program is nearly impossible. There are two ways to go: wait for sustainable funding or jump in with both feet. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Although waiting for an annual money stream is the best long-term solution, you risk never getting that budget or the process taking so long that thousands of students never see the benefits as they cycle out of the college or university before the technology loaning structure is in place. Jumping in feet first allows you to make purchases with possibly one-time funds that will not be available each year, but your students will reap the benefits of high-end technology immediately. We do not have an annual budget for funding our lendable technology collection. We made a sizable first purchase back in 2012 and have cobbled money together to make technology purchases through the years, knowing that the first purchases might have been our last.

## Conclusions

Almost six years have passed since the librarians at Cooper Library decided to deliberately upgrade and expand the lendable technology collection. It has been an extremely popular decision that often leads to the complete depletion of our camera, lens, microphone, and tripod reserves in the last few weeks of each semester as students scramble to finish projects. And that is how we know the decision to upgrade and expand the collection was the right move for us. The rewards have certainly outweighed the risks. If you want to go a lot deeper into getting started with lendable technology, I would suggest reading the excellent *Going Beyond Books to Loaning Technologies: A Practical Guide for Librarians* by Sander, Mestre, and Kurt.

## Appendix A

This is not an exhaustive list of technology that is available, but is geared more at the audio/video/virtual reality items we have to lend.

### **Camcorders**

BlackMagic Pocket Cinema Camera

Canon Vixia

Canon XA10 (Professional)

GoPro Hero 4

Sony Handycam

### **Cameras**

Canon PowerShot (small pocket-size camera)

Canon Rebel T3 DSLR

Canon Rebel T3i DSLR

Canon Rebel T5 DSLR

Canon Rebel T5i DSLR

Canon 7D Mark II DSLR

Nikon CoolPix (small pocket-size camera)

Nikon D3100 DSLR

Nikon D5100 DSLR

Nikon D5300 DSLR

Nikon D7100 DSLR

### **Camera Lenses**

Canon 55–250mm

Canon 50mm

Canon 10–22mm Wide Angle

Canon 75–300mm

Nikon 55–200mm

Nikon 50mm

### **Gaming and Virtual Reality**

HTC Vive

Oculus Rift

PlayStation 4

Samsung Gear 360

Samsung Gear VR

Samsung Gear Kit (includes VR & 360)

XBOX One

XBOX 360 Kinect

### **Gimbals**

iKam FLY X3 for GoPro

iKam FLY X3 for Smartphone

Osmo

### **Microphones**

Boom w/ Pole

Computer Snowball

Shotgun

Stage with Amplifier (includes both wired & wireless mics)

Wired Lavalier

Wireless Lapel

### **Tripods**

Cell Phone

Mini Tabletop

Standard

### **Video/Photography Accessories**

Mobile Green Screen

Light Kit

Photography Backdrop

### **Miscellaneous**

GPS

Wacom Tablet

Wacom Pen Display

Webcam

## Appendix B



Figure 1. Cooper Library lendable technology storage room.